

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

1999



2004

Session document

9 November 2001

B5-0706/2001

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

further to the Commission statement

pursuant to Rule 37(2) of the Rules of Procedure

by Pierre Jonckheer, Theo Bouwman, Heidi Hautala, Paul Lannoye and Nelly Maes

on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

on the economic and employment situation in the air transport sector and in the industrial and related service sectors

European Parliament resolution on the economic and employment situation in the air transport sector and in the industrial and related service sectors

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Council Directive 98/59/EC of 20 July 1998 on collective redundancies (consolidated version of Directives 75/129/EEC and 92/56/EEC),
- having regard to its resolutions of 28 October 1999, 17 February 2000 and February 2001 on company restructuring,
- A. whereas the collapse of Sabena, with 12 000 jobs at stake, and the waves of announcements by major airlines of closures or restructuring measures involving large-scale job cuts will have considerable social consequences,
- B. whereas the exorbitant increase in passenger-miles and in cargo tonne-miles in commercial aviation over the past four decades was not only due to new technological developments but also fuelled by direct and indirect state aids (subsidies, tax exemption for aircraft fuel, failure to internalise external costs),
- C. whereas, despite this increase in demand, the airline industry has built-up huge over-capacities around the world which have led to fierce competition, often to the detriment of the employment conditions of the personnel,
- D. whereas air carriers around the world, including most European airlines, had been in trouble well before the 11 September attacks in the United States using hijacked airliners,
- E. whereas deregulated competition in the air transport sector leads to insufficient investment in security/safety measures, social dumping and artificially low prices,
- 1. Sees the recent collapse of a few airlines as a warning signal for the survival of other struggling flag carriers in the European Union, and asks the Member States to cooperate closely in search of solutions;
- 2. Emphasises that public money should not be used to bail out the accumulated losses of airlines or to subsidise the operation of the air traffic business; urges, however, that governments step in when it comes to unpaid wages, social plans and the reskilling of the employees directly and indirectly affected, they being the ones who are suffering most because of the crisis;
- 3. States that European countries have given relatively small amounts of aid as a direct result of the September attacks, focusing instead on ensuring continued insurance cover for airlines, while the United States Congress voted \$5 billion in aid for airlines to compensate them for financial losses linked to the September 11 attacks, which puts

European airlines at a competitive disadvantage;

4. Gives its support to European Transport Commissioner Loyola de Palacio in denouncing anti-competitive practices by state-subsidised US airlines, which are charging non-cost-covering prices for transatlantic travel; asks, therefore, what measures the Commission envisages for putting an end to this distortion of competition;
5. Calls on the Commission to report to Parliament on the economic and social situation of all European airlines in order to work out a strategy on how to prevent similar situations in the future, considering also at what adjustments to European competition policy on this sector might be necessary;
6. Urges Switzerland, although the bilateral agreements (between Switzerland and the EU) had not yet been ratified, to inform the Commission fully of the details of the \$4.3 billion Swiss franc (\$2.62 billion) rescue package for the industry, and to seek a common solution which is consistent with fair competition;
7. Supports the Commissioner for Social Affairs and Employment, Anna Diamantopoulou, in noting that instruments existed, including the European Social Fund, and that this could be used to help find a way out of the current crisis, which was connected with the need for structural reform;
8. Urges the Commission, in keeping with the intermodal approach set out in the White Paper on Transport Policy (COM(2001) 370), to present concrete proposals for a harmonising framework, for both ground-handling at airports and flight operations, on minimum security/safety rules, combined with adequate social standards and fair and efficient pricing ('truth of costs also for air transport');
9. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the social partners.